

community coalitions

Building Community Coalitions

Coalitions are an alliance of people representing diverse organizations who agree to work together to achieve a common goal. Bolster your **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)** campaign by creating a coalition to promote educational resources about addiction, treatment, and recovery. Conduct comprehensive research to find groups and individuals across the country who share your mission. To unite and educate more people, expand the reach of your coalition beyond just your local community through social networking tools.

Sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, this year's **Recovery Month** campaign focuses on reaching audiences that are susceptible to alcohol and/or drug use in times of stress. Millions of Americans of every age, race, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and community suffer from substance use disorders. With online and community support, you will reach these groups, faster, easily, and more conveniently.

How to Begin

Coalitions unite leaders who represent different constituencies, such as elected or appointed officials and business, educational, health services, social, and religious groups. They bring together organized grassroots groups and people with a shared interest in achieving a mutual goal or need.

Participate in coalition activities by:

- Building one on your own if there is no active coalition that meets your needs; and
- Joining and supporting the **Recovery Month** efforts with a community coalition that already exists.

Creating a new coalition provides you with more extensive control and the ability to implement your own vision. On the other hand, uniting with an existing coalition will save upfront planning time, allowing you to quickly enhance existing efforts to celebrate **Recovery Month**. Remember that joining coalitions that have different goals from your own may be useful. For example, partnering with a coalition focused on anti-drinking and driving offers a significant opportunity for your organization to branch out if this is not an area you currently address. It is beneficial to continue your coalition after your **Recovery Month** event concludes to build stronger resources and connect available services to those in need.

Refer to the following tips to create a coalition in line with the goals of **Recovery Month**:

- **Decide specifically what issues related to substance use disorders you want to address.** How are these problems being handled? For example, are there treatment and recovery resources in your community that address the specific needs of various populations, such as veterans, public safety officials, older adults, and families?

- **Determine what resources are already available and what groups are currently involved online, in your community, and nationwide. Compare that with your goals and resources.** Consider people in the public and private sectors who might make influential and positive contributions to your **Recovery Month** coalition. Find organizations to partner with, such as prevention, treatment, and recovery services, law enforcement, and other social and educational agencies. Other organizations that have the resources and expertise needed to build a successful coalition around substance use disorders include:

- Adult independent living communities
- Alcohol and drug treatment centers and clinics
- Child welfare organizations
- Family therapist groups
- Foundations and volunteer groups
- Government officials and agencies
- Health-related organizations
- Mental health organizations
- National and local media outlets
- Post-traumatic stress disorder support groups
- Private companies/businesses
- Recovery bloggers
- Recovery support groups or people in recovery
- Schools, universities, and educational centers
- Unemployed support groups
- Veterans' associations
- War support groups

For a coalition to be most effective, each member must be committed to the mission and work collaboratively—this is much easier with online collaboration tools. This way, people with similar goals can work together remotely, rather than at the same location. Research all organizations before you invite them to join your coalition to be sure their missions align with yours. It is important that the relationship is mutually beneficial, not one-sided.

- **Recruit members to the coalition.** Contact your potential coalition allies and invite them to be a part of your coalition, or ask if they are already involved with one that you could join. Be sure to reference any existing connections you may have with members of their organizations. Use the following tools to build your coalition from the ground up:

- Social media, such as Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>), MySpace (<http://www.myspace.com>), or Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com>)
- Email
- A Web site encouraging people to join
- Virtual meetings
- Online services that can organize meetings simultaneously across the country, such as <http://www.meetup.com>

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When you recruit people to participate in your effort, have something substantive to show them, describe your mission, and ensure they have a specific role in the coalition.

- **Confirm the coalition participants** and evaluate whether you have included a diverse panel of organizations that work with different groups in the community. Participation commitments can be informal verbal agreements or formal written contracts among the members, depending on the scope of the collaboration. For the coalition to be successful, keep in mind these guidelines:
 - Be respectful of time commitments.
 - Allow all members to have an active role in decision making.
 - Set priorities and goals.
 - Agree on a communication process, and who will be responsible for maintaining it.
 - Communicate and meet regularly.
 - Prepare a budget for your activities and decide who will manage it.
 - Have a main contact person to coordinate all members.
 - Decide how you will determine the coalition's leadership early in the coalition's development.

A solid leadership team needs to oversee the coalition and ensure the efficient and timely execution of the coalition's plan, while fostering communication and a clear sense of the coalition's direction.

- **Grade your coalition and celebrate its successes.** See <http://www.cadca.org/resources/detail/evaluation-primer> for tools to assess the effectiveness of your collaborative partnership efforts.

Successful Partnerships to Model

Community coalitions have helped combat addiction for years. The **Recovery Month** observance has its own coalition made up of the **Recovery Month** Planning Partners. Organized in 1997, the Planning Partners are a coalition of more than 130 groups in the addiction, treatment, and recovery field. The group meets quarterly to determine goals and set priorities for **Recovery Month** every year. For a list of the **Planning Partners**, refer to the "Resources" section of this toolkit.

Additionally, the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and the U.S. Department of Justice fund hundreds of community partnerships throughout the country. In 2007, the **Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America** (CADCA) estimated that there were more than 5,000 operational anti-drug coalitions in the United States.

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resources

The following are addiction and other health-related coalition examples that will help guide you in the coalition-building process:

- **Mental Health America of Indiana** – Accessed at http://www.mhai.net/MHAI_page.htm, this organization promotes the mental health and recovery of all Indiana citizens through educational programs to increase public understanding and acceptance of people with a mental illness and addiction.
- **Addiction Coalition** – Accessed at <http://www.addictioncoalition.org>, this coalition is committed to stopping addiction in Central Alabama by raising community awareness and accelerating communication among professionals fighting addiction.
- **Ohio Citizen Advocates** – Accessed at <http://www.oa-ohio.org/MailingList.asp>, this group works to eliminate the stigma and discrimination associated with alcohol and other drug addiction by educating the public that addiction is a preventable, treatable medical illness.

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Recovery Month Coalition Resources

Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers of New York State

This nonprofit membership association consists of coalitions, programs, and agencies throughout New York State that provide substance use disorder prevention, treatment, and research.

518-426-3122

<http://www.asapnys.org>

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA)

This national organization builds and strengthens the capacity of community coalitions to create safe, healthy, and drug-free communities. The organization supports its members with technical assistance and training, public policy, media strategies, conferences, and special events.

800-542-2322

<http://www.cadca.org>

Faces & Voices of Recovery

This national recovery advocacy organization mobilizes people in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs, families, friends, and allies in campaigns to end discrimination and make recovery a reality for even more Americans.

202-737-0690

<http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org>

National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACoA)

*This national family recovery organization has members and affiliate organizations throughout the country who initiate or support **Recovery Month** activities in their local communities. NACoA provides its members with information, tools, and strategies to support recovery for children and families impacted by addiction.*

888-55-4COAS (2627)

301-468-0985

<http://www.nacoa.org>

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD)

Founded in 1944, this organization is dedicated to increasing public awareness and understanding of the disease of alcoholism and drug dependence. NCADD and its national network of State and local affiliates provide education, prevention, information/referral, intervention, treatment services, and advocacy, and have helped hundreds of thousands of individuals and families into recovery.

800-NCA-CALL (622-2255) (Hope Line)

212-269-7797

<http://www.ncadd.org>

National Inhalant Prevention Coalition (NIPC)

This public-private effort promotes awareness and recognition of the under-publicized problem of inhalant use. The coalition serves as an inhalant referral and information clearinghouse, stimulates media coverage about inhalant issues, develops informational materials and a newsletter, provides training and technical assistance, and leads a week-long national grassroots education and awareness campaign.

800-269-4237

423-265-4662

<http://www.inhalants.org>

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